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Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council demands immediate end to Croatian Government offensive in Sector West; urges parties to comply with existing cease-fire agreement.

+ Croatian Serbs fire cluster bombs into Zagreb, killing five, while Croatian Army shells Okucani; UNPROFOR reports no increase in military activity in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

+ Secretary-General, in New Zealand, meets with Defence Secretary and Chiefs of Staff; reviews provision of troops for Stand-by Arrangements for peace-keeping.

+ United Nations needs favourable public opinion more than ever, Assistant Secretary-General Sanbar tells Committee on Information.

+ Commission on Sustainable Development concludes third session by adopting 20 decisions on implementation of Agenda 21.

+ Benita Ferrero-Waldner resigns as United Nations Chief of Protocol.

+ Two million Haitians register to vote in upcoming elections.

+ UNITAR awards fellowships in international law to 18 candidates from developing countries.

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The Security Council last night demanded that the Croatian Government immediately end its military offensive in the Sector West area of Western Slavonia. In a statement by its President, Jean-Bernard Mérimée (France), the Council said the offensive was a violation of the cease-fire agreement signed by the Croatian Government and the local Serb authorities in March 1994. It urged the parties to end the hostilities and comply with the existing agreement.

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The Council also demanded that the parties respect the December 1994 Economic Agreement, and in particular to ensure the safety and security of the Zagreb-Belgrade Highway and the areas immediately surrounding it. It called on the parties to fully respect the safety and freedom of movement of all United Nations and European Community personnel in the area concerned, and to remove all restrictions placed on United Nations personnel. The Council urged the parties to accept the proposals put to them by Special Representative Yasushi Akashi without delay.

However, Mr. Akashi today said that the Croatian parties had broken a pledge to exercise maximum restraint while considering his proposal for a formal cease-fire agreement. He reported that there had been air and artillery attacks in Sector West this morning, and explosions in the heart of Zagreb and around Pleso Airport. Describing the situation as grave, he stressed the need to halt the escalating violence while there was still time to replace war with dialogue. Meanwhile, talks scheduled to take place today at Pleso were postponed because of logistical difficulties.

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Croatian Serb forces today fired rockets containing cluster bombs into Zagreb, according to a United Nations spokesman. Five people were killed and more than 120 were injured, six of whom were expected to die. Meanwhile, the Croatian Army continued its shelling of the area around Okucani. The fighting which erupted yesterday forced some 5,000 Croatian Serbs to take refuge across the border in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The spokesman said some 70 Nepalese peace-keepers pinned down by fighting around the Sava River Bridge had withdrawn safely and were re-establishing an observation post in the area. However, the United Nations had lost contact with 15 Nepalese soldiers who were stuck between Croatian Army and Croatian Serb positions north of Okucani. Meanwhile, Croatian Serb forces were preventing 62 Argentinian and 14 Nepalese peace-keepers from leaving their observation posts. In addition, 36 civilian police monitors and two local interpreters were being held in a school in the Okucani area, but were being treated well.

The expiration of the Bosnian cessation of hostilities agreement on Saturday had not lead to increased military activity in the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) mission area, the spokesman continued. The situation in Sarajevo was quiet, although Bihac and Gorazde had both come under fire from Bosnian Serb positions.

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Continuing his official visit to New Zealand, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today met with the Defence Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defence, Gerald Hensley. They reviewed the provision of troops to United Nations Stand-by Arrangements for peace-keeping. The Secretary-General expressed his gratitude for New Zealand's contributions to peace-keeping operations over the years.

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The Secretary-General then called on the Minister for Disarmament and Arms Control, Douglas Graham, and discussed a range of issues. He later met with the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Don McKinnon. They focused on New Zealand's international and regional role, cooperation with the United Nations, and the situations in East Timor, Cambodia and the former Yugoslavia. The Secretary-General also met with Opposition Leader Helen Clark.

In the afternoon, the Secretary-General flew to Linton Military Camp to meet with Defence Force personnel who had served in peace-keeping operations. He will leave New Zealand tomorrow for an official visit to Fiji.

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Never has the ability of the United Nations to disseminate information on its work and achievements been more important, according to the Assistant Secretary-General for Public Information, Samir Sanbar. In an address to the Committee on Information yesterday, he said the Organization needed to generate favourable public opinion more than ever before.

Mr. Sanbar called attention to new initiatives and approaches by the Department of Public Information (DPI). The question was how to employ limited resources to master new technologies and communicate the Organization's message to vast new audiences. Despite increased budgetary constraints and demands on resources, the DPI was keeping pace with rapidly evolving technology and accelerating along the "information superhighway".

The Committee yesterday elected Ivan Maximov (Bulgaria) as its Chairman, and Minhaj Barna (Pakistan), Jose Alberto de Sousa (Portugal) and Alejandro Hector Nieto (Argentina) as Vice-Chairmen. It also approved its provisional agenda and programme of work. Today, the Committee elected Fateh Zeghib (Algeria) as its Rapporteur.

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The Commission on Sustainable Development has concluded its third session by adopting 20 decisions relating to the implementation of Agenda 21 -- the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) Plan of Action. Decisions were taken on issues ranging from financial resources and mechanisms to its future work programme on changing consumption and production patterns.

By one of its decisions, the Committee established an ad hoc Intergovernmental Panel on Forests. It stressed the need for further assessment of action already undertaken to combat deforestation and to promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests.

In other actions, the Commission adopted its final report and the draft provisional agenda for its fourth session. It also approved the establishment of two ad hoc open-ended intersessional working groups. Those groups will

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address sectoral items on the atmosphere and oceans, and cross-sectoral issues of financial resources and mechanisms, as well as changing production and consumption patterns.

In summarizing the work of the High-level Segment, Commission Chairman Henrique Brandao Cavalcanti (Brazil) noted the attendance of over 50 ministers and State secretaries. The Segment was also attended by representatives of United Nations agencies, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.

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Benita Ferrero-Waldner has resigned from the position of United Nations Chief of Protocol in order to take up a high-level appointment in the Austrian Government, a United Nations spokesman announced today. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali accepted Mrs. Ferrero-Waldner's resignation with great regret, and expressed thanks for her service to the Organization.

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More than two million people -- or 70 per cent of the eligible electorate -- have registered to vote in the upcoming national elections in Haiti, according to a United Nations spokesman. The deadline for registration has been extended to 30 May. The first round of elections is scheduled to take place on 25 June, while the second round is scheduled for 23 July.

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The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) has awarded 18 fellowships in international law to candidates from Argentina, Bhutan, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Chile, Comoros, Egypt, Malawi, Maldives, Mali, Myanmar, Niger, Paraguay, Republic of Korea, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Turkey and Tunisia, as well as the Palestinian Authority.

UNITAR will hold a training programme at The Hague, Netherlands, from 3 July to 11 August. The programme will enable professionals from developing countries, particularly mid-level government officials and university teachers, to acquire additional knowledge about international law and the legal work of the United Nations and its associated bodies. Participants will attend special seminars organized by the Institute, and lectures on private and public international law at the Hague Academy of International Law.

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